

Adjusting to Divorce: Growth in Healing **by Bennett Ostroff, Psy.D.**

Divorce is often a disruptive and emotionally draining process that involves changes in one's physical, psychological, economic, and social life. Divorce usually represents a number of losses – a spouse, a marriage, a lifestyle, friends and family – and people who experience this loss must go through a grieving process. While individual reactions to divorce vary significantly, it is not uncommon for people to experience a range of emotions, including anger, sadness, guilt, hopelessness, loneliness, anxiety, and even joy or relief. Dealing with these emotions can be confusing and exhausting, and you may sometimes feel like you're losing control. Combine these feelings with drastic changes in lifestyle, and you may be primed to feel miserable for several months. However, keep in mind that these reactions are normal and expected and a necessary part of the healing process.

But there is good news. The effects of divorce are temporary, and most people report near-total recovery within two years. In fact, many individuals report a *decrease* in emotional stress following their divorce, especially when marital stress was high prior to the relationship ending. These divorcees often experience an increase in self-confidence, autonomy, and personal growth, as well as improvements in career opportunities, happiness, and social life.

Regardless of your unique circumstances, adjusting to a divorce is not something you should have to manage on your own. You may be reluctant to seek help from friends or family for fear of burdening them or hearing the dreaded advice, “You’ve got to stop thinking about him/her and just move on,” despite their best intentions. If you’re finding yourself confused, scared, or alone in this process, I can help you. Therapy will provide a safe, supportive, and confidential setting for you to freely express and sort through the pain you’re experiencing. We will work collaboratively to ensure that you navigate this difficult process in the healthiest way possible. You will begin to feel capable of adapting to your new life, reclaim a satisfying social life, and eventually feel ready for a new and healthy intimate relationship.